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AUTHOR Richards, Janet E. Clarke; Levitov, Justin E.
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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of R. Moss's "Classroom Analysis of Teachers' Theoretical Orientation to Reading" in order to provide an observation system specifically intended for assessing a teacher's reading instruction as a function of theoretical orientation. Five reading experts were chosen to individually teach reading lessons to a group of second and third graders. The subjects instructed the youngsters using reading approaches with three main orientations: grapho-phonics, skills, and whole-language. The lessons ranged in length from 12 to 28 minutes. The videotapes of these lessons were then individually presented to two classes of undergraduate education majors who used a slightly modified Moss observational system to rate the teachers' instructional behaviors. The original instrument was lengthened from four to six subcategories. The reliability analyses suggested that the instrument could yield stable estimates of theoretical orientation. In general the items on the validity assessment performed as expected. However, some items were correlated with factors other than those that were theoretically predicted. (HOD)

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AN OBSERVATIONAL MEASURE OF READING TEACHER INSTRUCTIONAL ORIENTATION

Janet E. Clarke Richards
and
Justin E. Levitov

Addresses:

Department of Curriculum & Instruction
College of Education
University of New Orleans
Lakefront
New Orleans, LA 70148
(504) 283-5079

Department of Education
Loyola University
6363 St. Charles Ave.
New Orleans, LA 70118

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association, Austin, February 1, 1985.

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An Observational Measure of Reading Teacher Instructional Orientation

Teachers teach reading in different ways and these different teaching methods may cause variations in the reading achievement of students (Barr, 1974-1975; Chall & Feldman, 1966; Cohen, 1974-1975; Harste, 1977; Harste, 1980; Theofield, 1978). Variations in reading achievement also influence students' basic conceptions of reading. If decisions which teachers make influence student reading achievement, it is important to know what guides these decisions.

One intriguing hypothesis states that teachers' beliefs about reading may influence reading instruction. Teacher belief about reading is termed a theoretical orientation (DeFord, 1979; Harste, 1977; Harste & Burke, 1976). Teachers may not consciously know their theoretical orientation. However these orientations may still influence reading instructional behaviors. Theoretical orientation may be the subtle, subconscious guide to teacher reading decisions regardless of the school curriculum and basal text focus. In fact, the reading instructional approach "may reflect a definition quite different from that consciously expressed by the teacher or the textbook" (Harste, 1980, p.4).

When teachers are unaware that they operate from their particular orientation to reading they do not have the opportunity to examine the association between what they believe and what they do. Furthermore, it may prove difficult for teachers to enlarge reading instructional repertoires unless teachers first recognize and then desire to expand their underlying belief system about reading. Instructional change cannot take place unless the subjective reasonable beliefs of teachers are considered (Fenstermacher, 1978; Harre & Secord, 1972; Magoon, 1977). In other words, unless the belief system of the teacher is taken into account, suggestions offered from reading researchers, supervisors and principals may produce minimal effects on teachers reading instruction.

The importance of theoretical orientation was first hypothesized by Harste and Burke (1976). They concluded that reading teachers are consistently theoretical in their instructional approaches. That is, the teacher teaches reading according to what he or she implicitly or explicitly believes is the correct way.

> Human reasoning (which contains beliefs, perceptions and purposes) can be both explicit and implicit ... Implicit reasons for acting are not directly articulated, but they do direct behaviors and govern perceptions of what are reasonable and appropriate means and ends. (Popkewitz & Wehlage, 1977, p. 84)

Some reading researchers argue that theoretical orientation does not exert a noteworthy influence on a teacher's actual

instructional approach to reading. Many researchers however, emphatically state that teachers consistently operate from their particular often unarticulated orientation to reading regardless of other considerations (DeFord, 1979; Harste, 1977; Harste & Burke, 1976; Harste, Stricker & Fay, 1976).

One important aspect of theoretical orientation is the influence this variable exerts on a wide range of decisions made by teachers about reading instruction. These important decisions about reading include:

1. What goals are set by the reading program?
2. What behaviors are perceived as reflective of "good" reading behavior?
3. What procedure, materials, and information are used to for instructional diagnosis?
4. What weighting is given to particular diagnostic information?
5. What approach and materials are selected and used for instruction in the program?
6. What environment is perceived as most conducive to reading growth?
7. What criteria are used to determine growth in reading (DeFord, 1979, pp. 8,9)

While it is possible for a teacher to hold an extremely broad or eclectic orientation, three major teacher reading beliefs have been particularly identified. These orientations are of special interest because of their unique features and because many teachers adhere to one of the three orientations (DeFord, 1979; Harst & Burke, 1976). These orientations are a grapho-phonics, a skills, and a

whole-language orientation (DeFord, 1979; Harste, 1977; & Theofield, 1978). The three orientations differ according to the size of the unit of language deemed important for text conprehension (dissected portions of words, words, or longer sections of text).

Grapho-phonics orientation

The grapho-phonics view posits that reading skill is best achieved by initially foucsing on dissected portions of words (Gough, 1976). Teachers holing a grapho-phonics orientation place instructional emphasis on the introduction of graphemes (alphabet symbols) and the corresponding phonemes (the smallest unit of speech sound represented by an alphabet symbol) (Moss, 1981). Grapho-phonics proponents believe that reading instruction should initially emphasize the skill of decoding or of turning the printed symbol into the sounds of language (McCracken & Walcutt, 1963).

Skills Orientation

The skills orientation posits that reading skill is best developed by initially teaching basic sight words and word identification techniques such as structural anaylsis strategies (breaking words into parts, dictionary skills, syllabication rules and prefix/suffix meanings). Teachers with a skills orientation rely on basal texts for reading

instruction, divide the class into homogenous groups according to reading ability, introduce new words in basal text lessons; conduct oral reading activities during which every child reads aloud, and use workbooks for skill reinforcemnt (Harste, 1977).

Whole-language Orientation

The whole-language orientation postis that reading is a natural extension of spoken language. Reading success is related to reader experiences and language competence (Moss, 1981; Smith, Goodman & Meredith, 1976).

Theoretical Orientation Studies

A relationship between professed theoretical orientation and teacher reading instruction has not been conclusively established. The few studies which have investigated theoretical orientation have produced opposing and inconclusive results. For instance, some researchers conclude that there is no relationship between theoretical orientation and reading instruction (Hoffman & Kugle, 1981), while other investigators report that theoretical orientation is situational and depends upon students' reading ability or classroom management problems (Bawden et al., 1979; 1980; Duffy & Metheny, 1978). Furthermore Harste (1977) and DeFord (1979) conclude that a teacher's reading

instructional behavior is consistently in agreement with theoretical orientation.

The enigmatic results of teacher theoretical orientation studies may be due to confusion about how to gather the information. In much of the research a consistent measure that separates teachers' reading beliefs into the three major orientation of grapho-phonics, skills, and whole-language has not been employed (DeFord, 1979). For example, data have been collected by audio and visual transcript and field notes (Duffy & McIntyre, 1980; Hoffman & Kugle, 1981), teacher ranking of students according to reading ability (Harste, 1977), reading attitude interviews (Duffy & McIntyre 1980; Stansell & Hubert, 1978), and a theoretical orientation profile (Hoffman & Kugle, 1981; Stansell & Robeck, 1979). Reliability and validity are reported for only one instrument, the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (DeFord, 1979). This instrument is a paper-pencil survey which identifies professed teachers' theoretical orientations (grapho-phonics, skills, and whole-language). Researchers who have attempted to observe actual reading instruction in order to determine if professed orientation agrees with actual teacher reading instructional behavior have had to depend upon lengthy observation periods and experts' opinions or assumptions (DeFord, 1979). A discipline specific observation instrument has not been available.

Fortunately, Moss (1981) has recently developed an observational system that is specifically designed to assess teachers reading theoretical orientation in terms of the three major reading approaches of grapho-phonics, skills, and whole-language. The validity and the reliability of the Moss (1981) teacher observation instrument however, is not well-known.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to assess the validity and reliability of the Moss (1981) Classroom Analysis of Teachers Theoretical Orientation to Reading in order to provide an observation system which is specifically intended for assessing of teacher's reading instruction as a function of theoretical orientation.

Methodology

Five reading experts were chosen to individually teach reading lessons to a group of second and third graders. The subjects instructed the youngsters using reading approaches associated with the three main orientations: grapho-phonics, skills and whole-language. The lessons ranged in length from 12 to 28 minutes. The five videotapes (2 skills, 2 whole-language and 1 grapho-phonics) of these lessons were then individually presented to two classes of undergraduate

education majors (n=38) who used a slightly modified Moss (1981) observational system to rate the teachers' instructional behaviors. The original Moss (1981) reading teacher observation instrument (Appendix A) was lengthened from four to six subcategories in order to more completely characterize each of the three instructional orientations (Appendix B).

Results

The initial steps of analysis focused on the reliability of data generated using the modified instrument. Ten of the subjects in the study re-rated the five videotapes in order to estimate test-retest reliability coefficients. First, 10 intraindividual reliability coefficient were computed for the 49 pairs of ratings (10 subjects x 5 videotapes - 1 missing rating). The mean coefficient was .938 (SD=.073). Second, three test-retest coefficients were computed for each of the instrument scales pooling across the videotapes. Thus 49 pairs of data were available for estimating each scale reliability. The test-retest reliabilities of all three scales were greater than .95.

The validity of the ratings was evaluated using factor analysis techniques. Data from all subjects across all videotapes were employed in this analysis. Based on theoretical expectations, three factors were extracted using principal components

methods. All three factors had eigenvalues greater than one; the factors reproduced 55.8% of the variance in the 18x18 correlation matrix. The varimax rotated factor pattern coefficients are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Factor Pattern Coefficients

	Factor			
Item	I	II	III	Mean (SD)
Skills 4	.94	-.01	-.05	1.28(2.35)
Skills 3	.93	-.01	-.16	.35 (.74)
Skills 2	.85	-.02	.32	1.09(1.60)
Skills 6	.52	.00	.19	.29 (.76)
Whole Language 1	.47	.00	-.18	.04 (.19)
Grapho-phonics 2	-.33	-.81	-.30	1.82(3.47)
Grapho-phonics 6	-.27	-.76	-.11	.64(1.15)
Whole Language 4	-.43	.75	-.31	5.21(6.72)
Whole Language 2	-.32	.61	-.21	1.99(4.20)
Whole Language 3	-.30	.59	-.22	.40 (.88)
Whole Language 5	-.34	.59	-.06	.48 (.82)
Grapho-phonics 4	-.23	-.57	.54	.40 (.62)
Skills 5	.03	-.08	.94	2.68(5.03)
Skills 1	.24	-.05	.87	1.28(2.10)
Grapho-phonics 1	-.03	.00	.54	.07 (.32)
Grapho-phonics 3	-.08	-.10	.16	.02 (.19)
Grapho-phonics 5	-.17	-.35	.06	.06 (.27)
Whole Language 6	-.19	.25	-.22	.70(1.57)

Cosines among the obtained and the expected factors were also computed. These are correlation or validity coefficients and assess how closely obtained results correspond with theoretical expectations. The cosines for the three factors were, respectively: .69, .88, and .70.

Discussion

The reliability analyses suggest that Moss (1981) Classroom Analysis of Teachers Theoretical Orientation to Reading can yield stable estimates of theoreical orientation. This was true both when data were analyzed intra- and interindividually. Of course, reliable measurement is essential, because valid measurement is possible only with reliable measurement. The results were particularly noteworthy since the raters were limited in both their expertise in reading and in their familiarity with the observational instrument, notwithstanding some training prior to the study. Even more favorable results should be expected with more highly trained raters.

The validity assessment results are more difficult to interpret. In general the items performed as expected. However some items were correlated with factors other than those that were theoretically predicted, and some items were not substantially correlated with any of the three factors. Inspection of the means and standard deviations also presented in Table 1 give some idea as to why this occurred. Items which deviated from theoretical expectation or had disproportionately lower factor pattern coefficients tended to be items with small standard deviations and means. Since the means indicate average rated number of minutes in which the behaviors were manifested in the videotapes, these descriptive statistics suggest that some behaviors were not

manifested enough to contribute variance to the correlation matrix. Thus, the factor analysis could not capitalize on the information represented by these factors. Data sets in which the behaviors are manifested may provide more definitive evidence regarding the validity of these particular items. This possibility remains to be explored in future research.

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Appendix A

SCHEDULE 1
DIRECT INSTRUCTION AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS
CLASSROOM ANALYSIS OF TEACHER'S
THEORETICAL ORIENTATION TO READING

TEACHER _____ SCHOOL _____ GRADE _____

OBSERVER _____ DATE _____ TIME STARTED ____ TO ____

PHONICS

INSTRUCTION	MINUTES
1. Consonant sounds	
2. Vowel sounds	
3. Phonics rules	
4. Letter names	
MATERIALS:	
1. Phonics rules	
2. Consonants	
3. Vowels	
4. Letter names	

SKILLS

INSTRUCTION	
1. Sight words	
2. Literal comprehension questions	
3. Structural analysis skills	
3. Study skills	
MATERIALS	
1. Sight words (isolated or story)	
2. Story comprehension questions	
3. Structural analysis skills	
4. Study skills	

WHOLE LANGUAGE

INSTRUCTION	
1. Sustained silent reading	
2. Student writing or dictation	
3. Student follows/teacher reads	
MATERIALS	
1. Trade books	
2. Language experience stories	
3. Newspapers, magazines, etc.	
4. Tapes, records of stories	
5. Modified cloze format stories	
NON-EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES	
Directional, Management, etc.	

Appendix B

SCHEDULE
DIRECT INSTRUCT
CLASSROOM ANALYSIS OF TEACHER'S
THEORETICAL ORIENTATION TO READING

TEACHER_____SCHOOL_____

OBSERVER_____DATE_____

TIME STARTED_____TO_____

PHONICS

INSTRUCTION	MINUTES
1. Consonant sounds	
2. Vowel sounds	
3. Phonics rules	
4. Letter names	
5. Teacher tells students to "sound out" unfamiliar words in text	
6. Teacher asks students for the first, middle, or last sound in a word	

SKILLS

INSTRUCTION	
1. Sight words	
2. Literal Comprehension questions	
3. Structural analysis skills (root words, prefixes, suffixes, syllabication rules, verb inflections)	
4. Study skills (dictionary, thesaurus)	
5. Round robin oral reading	
6. Teacher tells student unfamiliar words in text	

WHOLE LANGUAGE

INSTRUCTION

1. Students read silently/library books, newspapers, magazines, student related stories, texts

2. Student writing or dictation

3. Teacher reads to students/students follow

4. Teacher elicits and encourages children's oral language

5. Teacher encourages students to determine unfamiliar words through the context of the passage

6. Drama, poetry, book and puppet making, students illustrate writing projects, cloze or maze formats